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SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES USING THE FOREGOING COURSE

BY GEORGIA L. CHAMBERLIN

INTRODUCTORY

In conducting the work of a group studying the Book of Jeremiah, it is particularly important that the leader should see that a clear view is secured of the background of history. The changes are so rapid, the conditions so confused, and the crises so acute, that most people have a very vague and cloudy notion of everything except the final carrying away of the people into captivity at the fall of Jerusalem. Of course the matter of greatest importance is that the character of Jeremiah shall stand out in its supreme self-sacrifice and adherence to the self-imposed task of preaching righteousness to a people, on the one hand confused and terrified by the encroachments of the enemy, and on the other blindly confident that the former deliverances of the people would be repeated in the present crisis. To trace analogies between the life of Jeremiah and many modern reformers is also very important. This book possesses wonderful possibilities for dramatic presentation in tableaux, brief scenes, or a continuous series of scenes.

Programs may be as follows:

PROGRAM I

1. The "calls" of the prophets. What did they signify? What was their source? What relation had they to the times in which the prophets lived? The "call" of Jeremiah [*Leader*]. 2. Religious ideals concerning worship and conduct in the reign of Ammon and Manasseh. 3. "The Scythian terror," in fact and in the descriptions of Jeremiah. 4. Jeremiah's early training and experience. 5. A comparison of Isaiah's interpretation of the Assyrian invasion and Jeremiah's interpretation of the Scythian invasion, and of the outcome in the case of each.

Discussion: Are modern preachers "called," and if so, how, and for what?

PROGRAM II

1. The temple and the local shrines in Judah. The significance and consequences of the new doctrine of centralization of worship in Jerusalem [*Leader*]. 2. The finding of the law book. 3. Contents and doctrine of the law book. 4. The reformation of Josiah. 5. Death of Josiah, and interpretation by Judah.

Discussion: What elements are necessary in order that a reformation may be lasting?

PROGRAM III

1. A sketch of political changes in Babylon after the death of Josiah [*Leader*]. 2. Jeremiah's "roll" and its fate. 3. His symbolic sermons, as "The Potter," "The Rechabites," etc. 4. Jeremiah's theory of the future of Judah and the relation of the Jews to Jehovah.

Discussion: If you had been a Jew living in Judah in Jeremiah's time, how would you have regarded him, and why?

PROGRAM IV

1. The significance of the fall of Jerusalem to the Jews in Babylon [*Leader*]. 2. The personal misfortunes of Jeremiah in the closing years of Jerusalem's decline and fall. 3. The book of consolation. 4. The story of Jeremiah's loyalty to deserted Judah, and his probable fate.

Discussion: What do you think was Jeremiah's greatest contribution to the religion of the Hebrews?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who was Jeremiah?
2. About how long did he preach in Judah?
3. In what important respect did his message differ from that of Isaiah?
4. What was the attitude of the people toward idolatry in the early days of Jeremiah and what toward Jehovah?
5. What nation threatened to destroy Judah when Jeremiah first commenced to preach?
6. Tell all that you can about King Josiah.
7. What was the book which influenced the king and Jeremiah?
8. What were the central principles of the book concerning Jehovah and the place for his worship?
9. Why was Josiah's reformation not permanent?
10. What do we mean by the "symbolic sermons" of Jeremiah?
11. Describe the one which you consider strongest.
12. How did Jeremiah try to make his messages permanent?
13. Give the story of one of his "rolls."
14. What three kings succeeded Josiah, and what was their relation to him?
15. What was Jeremiah's attitude toward each of them?
16. How would you describe Jeremiah's attitude toward Babylon?
17. When Jerusalem finally fell, why did he not gain safety and comfort for himself by accepting the offer of the Babylonians?
18. What can you say of his later life?
19. Why did not the people recognize Jeremiah as a true prophet of Jehovah?
20. Will you name modern reformers who have met with a similar lack of recognition of their messages?

REFERENCE READING

General: Henry Preserved Smith, *Old Testament History;* Kent, *The History of the Hebrews*, *The Historical Bible;* Ottley, *Short History of the Hebrews;* Wade, *Old Testament History;* Smith, *The Prophet and His Problems;* Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets;* Chamberlin, *The Hebrew Prophets.*

Special: Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*, chap. ix; Smith, *The Religion of Israel*, chap. ix; Addis, *The Hebrew Religion*, chap. vi; Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile*, pp. 160–99; Cheyne, *Jeremiah, His Life and Times; The Decline and Fall of the Kingdom of Judah;* Bennett, "The Book of Jeremiah" (*Expositor's Bible*); Peake, "Jeremiah" (*Century Bible*); Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, articles on "Jeremiah," "Baruch," "Nebuchadnezzar," "Gedaliah," "Josiah," "Jehoiakim," "Jehoiachin," "Zedekiah," "Anathoth," "Rechabites," "Jerusalem," "Topheth." (See also Historical chart.)

[The next study will deal with the prophets Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nahum, and Obadiah, and the relation of Judah to the nations.]